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SUBJECT: GEORGIA -- DELIVERY OF LETTER ON
RECOGNITION, COMMENTS ON INTERNAL SITUATION

REF: STATE 418469

¶1. (U) DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR DELIVERED PRESIDENTIAL LETTER RECOGNIZING THE INDEPENDENCE OF GEORGIA TO GEORGIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN MOSCOW PYOTR PETROVICH CHIKMEIDZE ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27. SHE ALSO EXPLAINED THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WILL BE ESTABLISHED, AND EXPRESSED U.S. DESIRE TO CONTINUE AN ACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF GEORGIA AND TO SUSTAIN CONTACTS THROUGH THE U.S. EMBASSY IN MOSCOW.

¶2. (C) CHIKMEIDZE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL LETTER, THEN EXPRESSED POLITE DISMAY THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS REMAINED AT ISSUE. "THINGS ARE VERY DIFFICULT AND COMPLICATED FOR US. WE HAVE MADE MANY MISTAKES, BUT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF WE TALK TO EACH OTHER, IF YOU WOULD MAKE YOUR POINTS DIRECTLY TO US, RATHER THAN SCOLDING US FROM A DISTANCE," HE SAID. HE ASSERTED GEORGIAN RESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY AND FOR THE VALUES REPRESENTED SPECIFICALLY BY AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, AND APPEALED FOR U.S. HELP AND COOPERATION.

¶3. (C) TURNING TO THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TBILISI, CHIKMEIDZE CRITICIZED THE OPPOSITION FOR "STRUGGLING FOR DEMOCRACY WITH MACHINE GUNS." AT THE SAME TIME, HE VOLUNTEERED THAT GAMSAKHURDIYA HAD MADE MANY MISTAKES, AND IMPLIED PERSONAL DOUBT AS TO WHETHER GAMSAKHURDIYA SHOULD ATTEMPT TO STAY ON. ACCORDING TO CHIKMEIDZE, GAMSAKHURDIYA HAD BEEN OFFERED SAFE PASSAGE OUT OF THE COUNTRY EARLIER THIS WEEK, AND HAD INITIALLY AGREED TO THIS. HIS ADVISORS, HOWEVER, WHOM CHIKMEIDZE DESCRIBED AS "THE WOMEN AROUND HIM," OPPOSED THIS, AND CONVINCED HIM OUT OF IT. CHIKMEIDZE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THERE ARE TUNNELS LEADING FROM THE GOVERNMENT BUILDING INTO THE HILLS SURROUNDING THE CITY; HE ASSUMES THAT THE OPPOSITION IS ALSO AWARE OF THESE POTENTIAL ACCESS/ESCAPE ROUTES.

¶4. (C) ACCORDING TO CHIKMEIDZE, THE ARMED OPPOSITION STORMED THE FORMER KGB PRISON IN TBILISI AND HAS FREED OPPOSITION FIGURES CHANTURIYA AND YOSELYANI, AMONG OTHERS. (THIS HAS SINCE BEEN CONFIRMED BY THE MEDIA.)

¶5. (C) CONCERNING GEORGIA'S POSSIBLE PLACE IN THE COMMONWEALTH, CHIKMEIDZE SAID THAT GAMSAKHURDIYA FAVORS GEORGIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMONWEALTH, AND THAT IF HE SURVIVES THE CURRENT STRUGGLE GEORGIA WILL JOIN THE COMMONWEALTH. MANY OTHERS OPPOSE THIS MOVE, HOWEVER, ARGUING THAT THE COMMONWEALTH WILL NOT WORK AND THEY DO NOT WISH TO GET INVOLVED IN A FAILING EFFORT. PROPONENTS OF THIS VIEW ACCOUNTED FOR GEORGIA'S POSITION AT THE ALMA-ATA MEETING. NONETHELESS, CHIKMEIDZE SUPPORTED INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMONWEALTH FOR WHAT BENEFITS MIGHT COME OF IT, AND EXPECTS THAT GEORGIA WILL EVENTUALLY JOIN THE GROUPING REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME OF THE CURRENT POWER STRUGGLE IN TBILISI.

COLLINS